HESITATION

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Hesitation

The Scenario

A choice you're making. A thing you want to do. An idea you have. A new direction to go in. There is something that you want to do and you're hesitating. That hesitation has a tendency to make you stop. You change your mind. You go in a different direction and you don't do the thing. You doubt yourself. The hesitation is fear. The fear is the problem. Let's talk about it.

The Story of Perception

Hesitation is created by doubt and/or fear. Hesitation comes from wanting to move in some direction and then questioning whether it's a good idea or not. Hesitation is a pause in the action. You got excited about the thing and then suddenly for some reason you start to question it. What that pause creates is an opportunity for fear or doubt to show up.

The problem isn't necessarily with the idea that you stuttered or hesitated for a second. The problem is with what you think during that moment because it's your thoughts that get you into trouble, not the hesitation itself.

The hesitation is a moment in time where you can legitimately and reasonably

double-check your work. It's the opportunity to make sure that you're going in the direction you want to go in. Am I happy with my choice? What happens is that we get tied up in the story we're telling ourselves about what we're doing and that's what generally stops us.

So, what's the story going on in the background? It's the story of not being good enough, that it won't work, that we might fail, or that people won't like it. Those stories are based on whatever our old wounds are. They aren't true, but they keep coming up anyway because you haven't figured out how to deal with the pain yet.

The doubt or fear makes you second guess yourself but it also gives you an opportunity to work through whatever the doubt or fear is. The trick here is that you have to be aware of your own thinking. What's the story you're telling? That story matters because it determines whether or not you continue on with the thing you've decided to do or the choice you've made.

We stop ourselves because we get tied up in that story. We believe what our brains tell us. Nobody told us not to do that, so we do it out of habit. I want you to question the story your mind is telling you by asking questions like:

- Is the story true and how do I know? What proof do I have in my present reality that says the story is true?
- What pain or old wound is that story based on?
- Where have I had this problem in the past?
- Have I stopped myself like this before?

- What is the fear or doubt that I have? Why am I allowing that to stop me?

The story you're telling is based on something you picked up somewhere along the way either in your experience or from somebody else, or it's something you decided on your own based on your own previous experience. Either way it's just a story that makes you doubt yourself and doesn't let you get started.

The reason it's a story and it's not true is because it's based on skewed perception. What's the skewed perception? That the outcome matters. That what people think matters. That your worthiness was ever in question in the first place. That your power was ever in question. That your ability to do it was ever in question. Those ideas are skewed perceptions based on what other people have told you about yourself. It's also possible that you weren't able to do something well and started telling yourself one or more of those stories because of those past failures.

Your perception is skewed because it focuses on the problem with it. The truth is that there is no problem with it. The problem was made up in your head by you. The problem is only in your perception of it and your perception of yourself.

I often compare perception to a fun house mirror because that's how warped our perception can get. When you look in a fun house mirror, what happens to the shape of your physical form? It gets all warped in some kind of a way depending on the mirror. It might make you short and extra wide. It might make you very tall and lean. When you look in that mirror you know that it's a skewed mirror. You know that it's not telling you the truth about what you actually look like. You look in the

mirror with the expectation that it will be warped. Assume the same thing with your perception all the time. If you just start expecting it to be skewed it stops you from buying into it and allows you to question it. Am I seeing this clearly?

I'll tell you that even after doing this for as long as I have, I still have to question my perception all the time. The old stories don't really go away. The mind keeps trying to throw them in there no matter how good you get at not buying into them. The mind is stuck in a way of perceiving the world. It's stuck in a method of trying to protect you that isn't the most helpful thing ever. Honestly, it's just a matter of being able to recognize those patterns. Have some things shifted? Yes, of course they have. Behaviorally, I'm able to manage myself better. I have more control over how I act and how I respond to what's happening around me. But there are still these little habits of perception that I have to continually watch for.

I don't make that a problem for me to solve though. I choose to live this way so I'm okay with the idea that it takes some work sometimes. I have to actively put my energy into shifting my screwy perception. I have to actively look for the fun house mirror in my own life. It's a constant process that I have to engage in. It's not a problem. There is nothing wrong. It's just how this goes. It's just part of the experience.

I've learned that if I can recognize the old story when it shows up, if I can recognize the fun house mirror is disguising itself again, then I have the opportunity to do something about it. I don't have to buy into the thoughts in my head. I have the

ability to make a conscious choice. I have the ability to decide whether my thoughts are true or not. When I give myself the opportunity to make that choice I can free myself from some of that screwy perception.

After you do this for a while you start to recognize the stories because they are always the same. It's like taking the same route to work every day, you know exactly where every single pothole is and so you're easily able to avoid them. The same is true with your perception. Once you're familiar with the stories you like to tell yourself, you can easily navigate around them and free yourself to keep going without getting stuck.

Sometimes we run into the fear of questioning our own perception. In some ways this is just defending the problem. We're scared of what happens if we question our own perception so we don't do it. But then our perception stops us all the time and we end up stuck in the pain anyway. We'll stay in the stuck in the problem when we don't like the solution to it. That's the fear of the solution keeping us stuck in the pain.

Generally the comments I get are that questioning my perception will lead me too far into the ego. I'll end up thinking too much. There's a fear of trying to understand or manage the mind. There's a fear of basically going too far in the other direction. We go from buying into everything the mind tells us no matter how crazy it is to getting stuck in the ego, becoming self-absorbed, and being unable to stop questioning ourselves.

Why does everything have to happen in extremes? We're not going for paranoia. That's not the goal here. You don't have to get caught in your ego. Your ego is actually in cahoots with your mind. They are on the same page. They are genuinely trying to protect you and they both use similar methods to do that. Unfortunately, those methods aren't all that helpful. They tend to keep us stuck.

Questioning our perception is not making ourselves paranoid about whether we're doing the right thing or not. Questioning our perception is looking for the pain in how we're seeing what's happening. You have the ability to separate yourself from your mind and your ego. You have the ability to sort of look back at yourself and watch yourself in action. Step back from your thoughts so you can see them clearly. No, you don't need to be intuitive to do this. You can step back from your own thinking and question it from that vantage point.

I often use the analogy of the difference between seeing a forest from the forest floor and seeing the forest from up in the sky in a helicopter. When you're down in the forest you're just looking at the bottoms of the trees. They all look the same and it's easy to get lost. Life doesn't generally offer a clear path and this forest is no different - there is no clear path through the forest. But when you're in the helicopter looking down on the forest, you can start to see a more clear path through the forest. You can start to see the direction you might want to head in. We can see our thoughts the same way.

When you buy into your thoughts that's you being in the forest staring at the

bottoms of the trees. When you step out of your head for a minute that's you getting up in that helicopter to get a better look at things. You get to make the choice of which vantage point you prefer.

Is there a risk to the helicopter? Yes. You can crash the helicopter. But there's also a risk of getting lost in the forest if you keep staring at the bottoms of the trees. The risk is ever-present in both scenarios. Which would you prefer? Generally the answer to that question is based on what you're more afraid of. This is what makes you defend the problem with it. Fear keeps you stuck in the perception you're most comfortable with, even if that perception causes pain. That means we have to deal with the fear. Let's do that in the next section.

Dealing With Fear

What are you afraid of? Are you making up outcomes that aren't true so that you can defend your fear? Probably because the mind is good at that. It does it frequently. Do you want to defend the fear? Do you want to stay stuck in the pain? Or do you want to move past all this and get to the good stuff?

The truth is that you don't really know the outcome. You don't really know what's going to happen. You're guessing. You're projecting your fear into the future and it's offering you an outcome that validates the fear you have. There's that skewed perception again. Fear warps your perception massively. Your perception will validate whatever it is you're thinking or feeling every single time. That's how perception

works. It's also why you have to question it because it is just validating whatever the fear is. The fear isn't true and so therefore, the perception is not either.

Why isn't the fear true? Because it's based on old pain. It's based on the story you tell yourself that says somebody else might not like it or that you're not good enough or that you'll fail. You end up making choices based on your skewed perception and you actually end up creating more pain. You're stuck in the focus on the problem with it. And because you're focused on the problem, it's bringing up the fear and the pain.

An analogy I used to use often was the difference between seeing the forest from down on the forest floor to seeing the forest from up above in a helicopter. The difference in these views is astounding. While the view from the forest floor can be pretty cool and there is probably all kinds of neat stuff there for you to find, it doesn't offer much clarity. It doesn't show you how big the forest is. It doesn't show you how many tress there are. It doesn't necessarily offer you a clear path. It messes with your sense of direction. It focuses you on the little details instead of the bigger picture.

When you get up in the helicopter and you look down on that same forest, you can no longer see those little details. Now what you see is the size of the forest. You might be able to notice a clear path. Your sense of direction is no longer messed up. You could count the trees if you wanted to. You see all of the different types of trees that the forest is comprised of.

Both of these views are important, but if you get stuck in either one of them

it'll mess with your perception. You need both views. The minutia is important. The little details can matter in the short term. You also need the big picture. The big picture offers you a bigger goal. It helps to put the minutia into perspective. It makes those little steps easier to take. It offers you a clearer path to where you want to go.

When you get stuck in the little details or the result of that one thing, it detracts from the bigger picture. It makes you question the bigger picture. It makes you question whether you're going in the right direction or not. That's your queue to get up in the helicopter. That's your queue to check out the bigger picture. But now you have to be careful. If you take the wonky perspective and the fear with you when you get in the helicopter, it's going to mess with your perception again. You have to be willing to look at the bigger picture without the filter of pain you've offered yourself.

What you actually want to do when you get in that helicopter is remind yourself of why you're there. What's the point? What's the purpose? What's your motivation? What you want to offer yourself from this perspective is the commitment to keep going. You're not using the bigger picture to try to diagnose the problem on the forest floor. You're using the bigger picture to understand why you needed that problem and why it's okay to keep going. The bigger picture helps remove the fear of taking the next step.

When we focus too closely on trying to figure out what happens when we make a choice or do a thing, it offers fear. The reason it offers fear is because you can't see what happens next. That's why we zoom out. That's why we take a look at the bigger

picture again. The reality is that those small steps make such tiny changes to things that you won't really notice right away. It's not a massive leap. It's a tiny little baby step, but it's made you afraid because you think it's this life altering thing. Your mind makes you believe it's life-altering. That's the fear telling you a story that isn't true. Your mind is just validating the fear for you.

What I'm trying to show you is that you have the ability to catch this in action in your own head. You can stop this before it stops you by being aware of it. Anytime the mind offers you a thought that's painful, it's validating some pain you're holding onto within yourself. If you can catch the thought, you offer yourself the opportunity to figure out what the pain is that's being validated by that thought.

You don't want to do that. Why? Because the fear tells you there is something hiding in the shadows. The fear tells you there is no step there. If you move forward you'll into the abyss never to be seen again. The fear tells you that some life-altering thing is going to happen. The fear tells you not to because it's trying to protect you from your own pain. The fear is how you defend yourself from your own pain. It validates the pain you're in and gives you a reason to stay there. Your job is to decide that those stories of fear you tell are not true, feel the fear and then do the thing anyway.

The analogy that often gets used is the one of driving down a pitch black highway at night. You can only see whatever your headlights show you. That's why you go buy the biggest, brightest, most obnoxious headlights you can find and you put

them on the high beam so you blind everybody you pass. It's fear. Fear of what you can't see. You try to control the fear by controlling the brightness of the bulb you're using in your headlight. The bigger and brighter it is the safer you'll feel.

I'm not suggesting that you drive down the highway at night with no headlights on, but what I am suggesting is that the bulbs you have are good enough. What you can see is enough. You don't need more than what you already have. The little bit of understanding or clarity you have is all you need to move forward. All the fear is doing is making you want to go out and buy brighter headlights. But that's a choice you make from fear. What other choices are you making from fear? Where else is that analogy playing out in your life?

What hesitation does is that it puts a space in there that your mind wants to fill in with something. The mind will forever fill in space with pain. Why? Because the mind is constantly wanting to defend you. Its job is to keep your body alive. Even if the pain isn't physical pain or injury, the mind will still protect you from it. Any chance it gets to fill in the cracks with some pain, it will take. No, your mind is not out to get you. It's trying to keep you alive. We don't have to make the mind into a villain to understand and be okay with changing the strategies the mind uses.

Hesitation is a beautiful opportunity for your mind to sneak some doubt in there. And with doubt comes fear. And with fear comes more hesitation. More doubt. More worry. More fear. More hesitation. The cycle continues until you break it.

How do you break it? By being aware of the thoughts that are creating the

hesitation. Stop telling the stories. Feel the fear and do it anyway. Understand that you don't need to doubt your choice just because the fear showed up or just because you hesitated. You can still make the choice and move forward anyway. You don't have to stop. You just have to see where you create your own pain in your mind and work through that.

The Argument With It

The argument is that the hesitation shows up for a reason. We assume that the reason is that we shouldn't do the thing. Congratulations! You're still validating your own pain! How cool is that?

The hesitation is showing you the pain you need to heal so you can do the thing. But you like to use it as validation of your desire to run away from it because it's easier. It's safe. It's protective. It removes the feeling of walking into an unknown. It removes the fear.

This is an example of thoughts validating pain that we hold onto within ourselves. The work is to recognize the thought when it comes up and question

whether it's true. What is it validating? Painful thoughts validate pain. Fearful thoughts validate fear. If the thought is validating the original choice to do the thing, that's what you take on and move forward with. That thought is no longer offering pain, so you trust it and run with that.

But what if it's wrong?! Yep. That's the risk of going with it what shows up. That's the risk of doing the work. You take on the idea that it might not work out quite right and you figure out how to get okay with that.

If you can learn to see your experience as an opportunity for growth or more learning instead of a pass or fail exam, it frees you up to move in any direction you want to. By that I mean, the outcome doesn't really matter. You make it matter because it validates the hesitation again. But it doesn't matter because the point of the experience is the growth you get from the experience itself, not the outcome.

The hesitation is offering you pain, but what are you focusing on? Running away? Not doing the thing? Changing your mind? The risk? More pain? If you shifted your focus to questioning why the pain is there instead of trying to defend it and validate it, you'd get further. You'd get out of it quicker and wouldn't hurt so much.

But I have to validate how I feel! By giving into the fear every time it shows up? By wallowing in it? By staying stuck in your feels? It's okay to acknowledge how you feel, but that shouldn't require you to stay there indefinitely and it definitely should not require you to give into it. Accept the feeling then work to understand why it showed up so you can release it or heal it and move on.

Your arguments with not doing anything about how you feel or what you're thinking are keeping you in a cycle. They are causing you to make choices that you don't even want to make. You're hesitating on something you actually want to do. You don't want to run away from it. The choice doesn't make you happy. But then you refuse to deal with the pain that makes you question the choice. Now you're not happy. And you're stuck. And you're blaming the outside world for what you think you can't do.

The only way out of the cycle is to get off the hamster wheel. Stop going around in circles. Pay attention to your thoughts and feelings. They are showing you what you need to do next. They are showing you what the problem is with what you want to do and it's not out there. It's inside of you. You're not ready for what you want and you haven't yet done the work to fix that.

The pain you're still hanging onto within yourself is what makes you argue with it. It's what caused you to hesitate. Your job is to fix that. No, you can't fix all of it at the same time, but you can deal with the piece that showed up for you this time. By doing that, it'll give you the ability to move forward with this particular choice or thing you want to do. From there, you'll learn something else and then you'll be able to work through that. We're making a new hamster wheel here. Do you see that? We're trading in the hamster wheel of pain for the hamster wheel of healing. You're setting yourself up to be able to use your life experience to heal yourself.

What you'll find is that it isn't much of a hamster wheel at all because that

wheel opens up to offer you all kinds of options and paths that weren't available to you while you were stuck in pain. It can feel a little repetitive at first because there's a lot of work to do to clear a space big enough to move around in. But once you do, it starts to open up a path that's far bigger than anything you've imagined in the past.

Healing is an onion of sorts. That's a common analogy that we hear in spiritual circles. Why does it feel like the layers never seem to stop? Well, part of it is that spiritual healing doesn't usually acknowledge behavior. It's mostly a mental or emotional process that doesn't talk about or encourage shifting behavior. But shifting behavior is probably the most important step in the healing process because that's what actually changes your external reality. You're reacting differently to your own reality which is what ultimately changes it.

If you don't change your behavior then your reality never shifts. So what happens? The pain keeps coming back to you via your reality because you haven't changed your reaction to it yet. When you change your reaction to your reality, your reality stops offering you the pain. The key is you and your reaction to what's happening. That's the common denominator. You're the thing that's always present in your own reality. So you're the part of your reality that matters the most. When you change yourself you change the common denominator. That changes what happens. That's where your power is. It's within you. It's not out there.

The hesitation gets created when you put your power outside of yourself, when you tell stories about what your reality is doing or not doing. You are the most

important factor that you have control over. Are there things you can't control? Yes. You have to leave those alone. You can't make up stories about them either. They just get to exist and you simply learn how to work around them. Now is that easy? No because we like control so much. But the simple reality is that we don't have control over everything and we have to be okay with that. As long as we're not making up stories about it, it doesn't have to be painful. We can learn to work with the things we don't have control over.

The things we don't have control over can cause us to hesitate. It makes us feel like we need to find a way to control it or it may make us decide it's too risky to try. Again, this is the story that you're telling. Your lack of control over something doesn't make it any more or less risky. That's a story. You can do the thing regardless. You just have to decide to be okay with the outcome. The risk is a story. What's the risk? Failure. Problems. Struggle. We protect ourselves from risk by hesitating and then not doing what we were thinking about doing. Often we're unhappy with that. We want to accept the risk but the story we tell makes us afraid to do that. It's only when we drop the stories and accept the risk that we can move past the hesitation we feel.

Hesitation is based on story. Which of these stories are you telling? Can you drop them? Can you figure out how to get past them? Let's keep going with this so that you can stop hesitating and start moving forward.

The Perspective Shift

I managed to come up with lots of arguments with it. There are all kinds of reasons why not. Those always exist. It doesn't matter what the experience is, there's always a reason why not. It really comes down to making the choice to not focus on the story of "why not". Immediately we're back in the argument with it because if I tell you not focus on the problem with it, you tell me it's irresponsible not to focus on the problem with it. Somewhere in life somebody taught a lot of people that not focusing on problems was irresponsible. Who the heck came up with these dumb rules?

There is a difference between acknowledging the potential for a problem and turning the problem into a reason not to do something. Acknowledging the problem

is simply accepting that it's there. If I get there I'll deal with it then. Telling a story about the problem and trying to solve it before you have the tools to do that, makes you hesitate. It probably makes you change your mind because the fear takes over.

The shift in your focus comes from understanding what you're doing and why you're doing it. You're paying attention to your thoughts. When your thoughts offer you pain, you understand what the mind is doing and then you shift that because you don't have to accept what your mind offers you. That's managing your perception. It's managing yourself within your experience.

Nobody taught you to manage your thinking so you're in a habit of believing what your mind offers you. You very rarely question that, but you need to if you want to get past the hesitation that you feel. The only way to shift your perception is to understand what your perception is. The reality is that most people pay no attention. They either don't think they have control over their perception or they don't want to take control over it to begin with. You learn to be okay with whatever your default perception might be. That's what keeps you stuck in your patterns of thought.

When you're finally willing to question that because you're tried of walking away from things that you've hesitated on, then you can begin to shift it. But that's a choice. It's a conscious choice. It starts with questions like, "What is making me hesitate right now? Is that a story that I'm telling?" If all you did was pull out a journal, started writing about what was going on and then read it back to yourself, you'd be able to see the story clearly. You'd see your pattern. Now that you've seen it,

you have to make the choice to shift it.

How do you do that? Start with the story you've told yourself. Figure out why it's not true. Figure out why it's keeping you stuck. Figure out what the old pain is that it's attached to. Finally, figure out how to drop it or how to stop telling it.

The pain may appear somewhere on this journey and that's okay. The pain is just showing you that this thing runs deep. It's not something you have to do anything about. Just let the pain move through. Don't get tied up in it. Don't beat yourself up with it. Just let it flow through until it stops. It will stop. It is finite. It only keeps going if you keep telling stories about it or you buy into it. As long as you don't do either of those, the pain will stop on its own fairly quickly. Once the pain passes, you just go back to what you were doing.

As you move through this, it's going to offer you a choice. What's the choice? To move forward or stay stuck in the pain. How do you want to feel in your life? What do you want to create? Do you want this thing you're creating? The path opens up because you questioned the blockade you put in front of yourself. Now you get to decide which direction to go in. Any hesitation is still your own pain. It's still your own story. You just have to keep working through that until it stops and you're free and clear to make the choice.

I'm the first one to admit that the first few times you do this it's not going to be a fun ride. You are so attached to your stories and your need to defend yourself from your own pain, that it will be a knock down drag out fight to free yourself from

it. You just have to be determined to win that battle. How bad do you want it?

Why are motivational quotes so motivating? Because they free you up for a moment to question how bad you want that thing. It's only a moment. It doesn't last long. But it frees you for a second to connect back to your reason for being, whatever that is. It makes you aware of your own buried desire for a second. That's what makes the quote feel so motivating to you. It's because it's briefly offering you that connection. But here's the secret: that connection is always there. You just bury it in the pain of hesitation, doubt, worry, and fear. All you have to be able to do at any point is connect back to your why. Why are you doing the thing? If you can connect back to that and hold onto that long enough, you'll be able to use that to win the fight you're having with yourself.

Remember, the whole thing is internal to you. It's all you and your stuff. There's nothing happening outside of you. If you just deal with what goes on inside of you, the outside world will stop being so interesting. It'll stop being so much of a problem to you. You'll start to see how the outside world is reflecting back to you. You'll be able to use that to heal yourself and move forward on your own journey.

Your fear of something jumping out and biting you is what makes you continually think you need to defend yourself. But you're also your own shadow. There's nothing there except you and your own pain. You hid the plastic snake on yourself and then scared yourself when you found it some time later in the back of the closet. You use the plastic snake as the reason why you need to defend yourself. It's

all your own stuff.

All you have to do is drop the story. That's it. Leave the experience where it is and drop the story. Stop talking about the problem with it and just start doing it. I know it seems scary because it seems like you're opening yourself up to trouble, but you're not. You're opening yourself up to the freedom that comes from living the life you want and being happy in it. Don't ever let life tell you that you don't have a choice because you always have a choice; it's only a question of whether your perception lets you see it or not.